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In re Application of
Haaksma, et al.
Application No. 10/542,343
Filed: 17 April, 2006
Attorney Docket No. 8506-60087

OFFICE OF PETITIONS

: DECISION

This is a decision on the petition filed on 12 September, 2007, to expunge from the application certain materials under the provisions of 37 C.F.R. §1.59.

The Office regrets the delay in addressing this matter, however, the instant petition was presented to the attorneys in the Office of Petitions only at this writing.

The petition to expunge under 37 C.F.R. §1.59 is **DISMISSED**.

As discussed hereinbelow, Petitioner has failed to satisfy the requirement that Petitioner make the affirmative showings as set forth in the guidance at MPEP §724.05(II) items (A) through (E).

The conditions for a petition pursuant to 37 C.F.R. §1.59 are set forth in the regulation, to wit:

§ 1.59 Expungement of information or copy of papers in application file.

(a)...

- (1) Information in an application will not be expunged, except as provided in paragraph (b) of this section or §41.7(a) of this title.
- (2) Information forming part of the original disclosure (*i.e.*, written specification including the claims, drawings, and any preliminary amendment specifically incorporated into an executed oath or declaration under §§1.63 and 1.175) will not be expunged from the application file.

(b) An applicant may request that the Office expunge information, other than what is excluded by paragraph (a)(2) of this section, by filing a petition under this paragraph. Any petition to expunge information from an application must include the fee set forth in

§1.17(g) and establish to the satisfaction of the Director that the expungement of the information is appropriate in which case a notice granting the petition for expungement will be provided.

(c) Upon request by an applicant and payment of the fee specified in §1.19(b), the Office will furnish copies of an application, unless the application has been disposed of (see §§1.53(e), (f) and (g)). The Office cannot provide or certify copies of an application that has been disposed of.

Guidance in this matter is set forth at MPEP §724.05, which provides in pertinent part:

724.05 Petition To Expunge Information or Copy of Papers in Application File [R-6]

I.INFORMATION SUBMITTED UNDER MPEP §724.02

A petition under 37 C.F.R. §1.59(b) to expunge information submitted under MPEP §724.02, or that should have been submitted under MPEP §724.02 (as where proprietary information is submitted in an information disclosure statement but inadvertently not submitted in a sealed envelope as discussed in MPEP §724.02) will be entertained only if the petition fee (37 C.F.R. §1.17(g)) is filed and the information has been found *not* to be **>material to< patentability. If the information is found to be **>material to< patentability, any petition to expunge the information will be denied. Any such petition to expunge information submitted under MPEP §724.02 should be submitted at the time of filing the information under MPEP §724.02 and directed to the Technology Center (TC) to which the application is assigned. Such petition must contain:

- (A) a clear identification of the information to be expunged without disclosure of the details thereof;
- (B) a clear statement that the information to be expunged is trade secret material, proprietary material, and/or subject to a protective order, and that the information has not been otherwise made public;
- (C) a commitment on the part of the petitioner to retain such information for the period of any patent with regard to which such information is submitted;
- (D) a statement that the petition to expunge is being submitted by, or on behalf of, the party in interest who originally submitted the information;
- (E) the fee as set forth in 37 C.F.R. §1.17(g) for a petition under 37 C.F.R. §1.59(b).

Any such petition to expunge should accompany the submission of the information and, in any event, must be submitted in sufficient time that it can be acted on prior to the mailing of a notice of allowability or a notice of abandonment for original and reissue applications, or prior to>, or shortly after (i.e., in time to be addressed before the reexamination proceeding enters the reexamination certificate printing process),< the mailing of a Notice of Intent to Issue Reexamination Certificate (NIRC) for reexamination proceedings. Timely submission of the petition is, accordingly, extremely

important. If the petition does not accompany the information when it is initially submitted, the petition should be submitted while the application or reexamination is pending in the Technology Center (TC) and before it is transmitted to the Publishing Division. If a petition to expunge is not filed prior to the mailing of a notice of allowability or a notice of abandonment for original and reissue applications, or prior to, or shortly after (i.e., in time to be addressed before the reexamination proceeding enters the reexamination certificate printing process),
< the mailing of a NIRC for reexamination proceedings, any material then in the file will remain therein and be open to the public in accordance with 37 C.F.R. §1.14. Accordingly, it is important that both the submission of any material under MPEP §724.02 and the submission of any petition to expunge occur as early as possible during the examination process. The decision will be held in abeyance and be decided upon the close of prosecution on the merits.

II.INFORMATION UNINTENTIONALLY SUBMITTED IN APPLICATION

A petition to expunge information unintentionally submitted in an application (other than information forming part of the original disclosure) may be filed under 37 C.F.R. §1.59(b), provided that:

- (A) the Office can effect such return prior to the issuance of any patent on the application in issue;
- (B) it is stated that the information submitted was unintentionally submitted and the failure to obtain its return would cause irreparable harm to the party who submitted the information or to the party in interest on whose behalf the information was submitted;
- (C) the information has not otherwise been made public;
- (D) there is a commitment on the part of the petitioner to retain such information for the period of any patent with regard to which such information is submitted;
- (E) it is established to the satisfaction of the Director that the information to be returned is not material information under 37 C.F.R. §1.56; and
- (F) the petition fee as set forth in 37 C.F.R. §1.17(g) is included.

A request to expunge information that has not been clearly identified as information that may be later subject to such a request by marking and placement in a separate sealed envelope or container shall be treated on a case-by-case basis. Applicants should note that unidentified information that is a trade secret, proprietary, or subject to a protective order that is submitted in an Information Disclosure Statement may inadvertently be placed in an Office prior art search file by the examiner due to the lack of such identification and may not be retrievable.

IV.INFORMATION FORMING PART OF THE ORIGINAL DISCLOSURE

A petition to expunge a part of the original disclosure must be filed under 37 C.F.R. §1.183, since such a request requires a waiver of the requirements of 37 C.F.R. §1.59(a). Petitions under 37 C.F.R. §1.183 should be directed to the Office of Petitions. The

petition must explain why justice requires waiver of the rules to permit the requested material to be expunged. It should be noted that petitions to expunge information which is a part of the original disclosure, such as the specification and drawings, will ordinarily not be favorably entertained. The original disclosures of applications are scanned for record keeping purposes. Accordingly, the grant of a petition to expunge information which is part of the original disclosure would require that the USPTO record of the originally filed application be changed, which may not be possible.

BACKGROUND

The record reflects that:

Petitioner avers that “the paper filed on August 8, 2007, with EFS ID 2063053 be expunged from the official record of the USPTO for this application. The paper was prepared responsively to an Office Action in a different application, and does not relate directly to the application identified above.”

From the averment set forth in the petition, the indication is that the discussion at MPEP §724.05(II) is applicable here.

Petitioner has not followed the requirements set out therein. Specifically, Petitioner has failed to make the affirmative showings as to MPEP §724.05(II) items (A) through (E).

(The Office will not return documents from a/the physical file because it is Office policy not to remove paper from files that have been scanned. Even if a petition “to expunge” is granted as to one or more documents with regard to an application or patent, the image of the recorded document will remain in the records of the Office. However, the Office will close the images in the application or patent that was the subject of the petition so that no information about the recorded document will appear when someone searches for the application or patent number in the electronic file.

The availability of applications and application papers online to applicants/practitioners who diligently associate their Customer Number with the respective application(s) now provides an applicant/practitioner on-demand information as to events/transactions in an application.

Out of an abundance of caution, Petitioners always are reminded that those registered to practice *and* all others who make representations before the Office must inquire into the underlying facts of representations made to the Office and support averments with the appropriate documentation—since all owe to the Office the continuing duty to disclose.¹

¹ See supplement of 17 June, 1999. The Patent and Trademark Office is relying on petitioner's duty of candor and good faith and accepting a statement made by Petitioner. See Changes to Patent Practice and Procedure, 62 Fed. Reg. at 53160 and 53178, 1203 Off. Gaz. Pat. Office at 88 and 103 (responses to comments 64 and 109)(applicant obligated under 37 C.F.R. §10.18 to inquire into the underlying facts and circumstances when providing statements to the Patent and Trademark Office). See specifically, the regulations at 37 C.F.R. §10.18.

CONCLUSION

The petition to expunge under 37 C.F.R. §1.59 is **DISMISSED**.

The instant application is released to Technology Center/AU 3626 for further processing in due course.

While telephone inquiries regarding this decision may be directed to the undersigned at (571) 272-3214, it is noted that all practice before the Office is in writing (see: 37 C.F.R. §1.2²) and the proper authority for action on any matter in this regard are the statutes (35 U.S.C.), regulations (37 C.F.R.) and the commentary on policy (MPEP). Therefore, no telephone discussion may be controlling or considered authority for Petitioner's action(s).

/John J. Gillon, Jr./
John J. Gillon, Jr.
Senior Attorney
Office of Petitions

² The regulations at 37 C.F.R. §1.2 provide:

§1.2 Business to be transacted in writing.

All business with the Patent and Trademark Office should be transacted in writing. The personal attendance of applicants or their attorneys or agents at the Patent and Trademark Office is unnecessary. The action of the Patent and Trademark Office will be based exclusively on the written record in the Office. No attention will be paid to any alleged oral promise, stipulation, or understanding in relation to which there is disagreement or doubt.